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Testimony Supporting House Bill No 6370
An Act Concerning a Middle College System

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce's 1,700 members supporting Governor Rell's bill, H.B. 6370, An Act Concerning a Middle College System.

The Stamford Chamber of Commerce has been an active supporter of Wright Technical High School and I have served on its Citizen Advisory Council for over eight years. The need for a technical high school in Stamford is by far the highest in the State because of the development that is taking place and will be taking place for many more years. This economy will turn around and Stamford will lead the state in its economic growth. We have a very strong corporate base in Stamford with strong employment demand. Even during these poor economic times we have economic development growth within the downtown and the south end that would be the envy of any city in the State of Connecticut during good economic times.

Wright Tech has struggled for many years with enrollment. It is not for lack of demand for students who would be excellent candidates, but because the facility has not kept pace with the rest of the technical high schools in the State of Connecticut. For the past decade, it has had a tremendous turnover in school leadership. In my eight plus years of serving on the Citizen Advisory Council there have been four principals. This has caused the school to be in constant flux and confusion. In the meantime, the facility has been neglected and the school resembles one from the 1950-60's.

The proposed combining of the State's technical high schools and the community colleges will provide great opportunity for the region's youth to gain the skills needed to establish a meaningful career. It provided opportunity for the students. After their four years at the technical high school, students can enter the workforce with the necessary skills such as electrical, plumbing, automotive, culinary, property management and in cosmetology. Or they have the opportunity to continue their education in a community college to gain further knowledge and receive an associate's degree and even beyond.

Education is critical to our youths' future so they can be productive members of our society. H.B. 6370 provides an excellent opportunity to put two great educational institutions together and create an educational opportunity that will reach the next level in preparing the workforce of tomorrow. This is exactly what is needed.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony. I respectfully request the Committee support this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.